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STATINTL

Reorganizing U.S. Intelligence

President Nixon has reorganized the Federal Government's intelligence operations which, in essence, gives Central Intelligence Agency Director Richard Helms a broader mandate to coordinate all of the various activities in this field. In the meantime Mr. Nixon also created a National Security Council Intelligence Committee to be chaired by his national security affairs adviser, Dr. Henry A. Kissinger.

These steps have drawn immediate objections from Senators J. William Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and Stuart Symington on the grounds that Congress was not consulted in advance about them, and that what Mr. Nixon evidently is trying to accomplish is a removal of Congressional overseeing of any intellligence activities by vesting the area almost wholly with Executive immunity. But the fact of the matter is that the President has dealt solely with the Executive Branch in taking this action, as he is unquestionably authorized to do. What irks the Senators is that they cannot, under the new setup, bring Doctor Kissinger before their committee to be interrogated in this area of Government.

What may have prompted Mr. Nixon's action was recent history. That details how President Kennedy got some bad intelligence from the military on the Bay of Pigs, and Lyndon Johnson some even worse intelligence from his White House people and some of the military on Vietnam. The story is that the CIA was not responsible for these bum steers. Consequently, President Nixon now wants the bulk of his intelligence to come through the hands of a polished professional, CIA Director Helms — who was most impressive in an unprecedented appearance before the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington last April — and a trusted adviser, Doctor Kissinger. Certainly that is his privilege, however the Senators may fret.

As Director Helms told the editors: "We (the CIA) not only have no stake in policy debate, but we can not and must not take sides. The role of intelligence in policy formulation is limited to providing facts — the agreed facts — and the whole known range of facts — relevant to the problem under consideration. Our role extends to the estimative function — the projection of likely developments from the facts — but not to advocacy, or recommendations for one course of action or another.

"As the President's principal intelligence officer, I am an adviser to the National Security Council, not a member, and when there is debate over alternative policy options, I do not and must not line up with either side.

"If I should take sides and recommend one solution, the other side is going to suspect — if not believe — that the intelligence presentation has been stacked to support my position, and the credibility of the CIA goes out the window."

To the journalistic profession, whose watchword is objectivity, which equates with a presentation of balanced facts as free from personal emotionalism, bias or bent as it is humanly possible to record, these words of Richard Helms are heartening. He is, in a strong sense, one of us. Indeed, as he himself put it, "objectivity puts me on familiar ground as an old wire service hand, but it is even more important to an intelligence organization serving the policymaker."

It is reassuring to realize that a man of this singular dedication and rational approach has been empowered by the President to serve as the nation's foremost intelligence officer. He has our best wishes in an